AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Applicant respectfully requests that this listing of claims replace the prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Currently amended) A method for concealing the true identity of a user in a communications system, the method comprising:

requesting a virtual identifier;

establishing a virtual identifier for a first user equipment in at least one of: the first user equipment and the service network;

linking the virtual identifier of the first user equipment to a characteristic identifier of the first user equipment;

predetermining one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier; and

using the virtual identifier of the first user equipment for communication between the first and a second user equipment ~~taking~~on the basis of the predetermined one or more limitations ~~into account~~.

2. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, the method further comprising requesting the virtual identifier from a service network of the communications system.

3. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, the method further comprising requesting multiple virtual identifiers from a service network of the communications system.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, the method further comprising providing a set of virtual identifiers in a service network of the communications system, one or more of the virtual identifiers being linked to the ~~first~~ characteristic identifier of the first user equipment.

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6. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, the method further comprising selecting, in a service network of the communications system, the virtual identifier to be used for communication between the first and the second user equipment.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, the method further comprising receiving at a service network of the communications system a request for establishing a communications connection between the first and the second user equipment, the request comprising the virtual identifier of the first user equipment.

9. (Previously presented) The method of claim 8, the method further comprising receiving the request for establishing the communications connection between the first and the second user equipment via a short message service.

10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 8, the method further comprising receiving the request for establishing the communications connection between the first and the second user equipment via an electronic mail server service.

11. (Previously presented) The method of claim 8, the method further comprising receiving the request for establishing the communications connection between the first and the second user equipment from the second user equipment.

12. (Previously presented) The method of claim 11, the method further comprising receiving, in the first user equipment, information about the use of the virtual identifier of the first user equipment.

13. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, the method further comprising predetermining a given validity period of the virtual identifier.

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14. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, the method further comprising predetermining one or more user equipment that have the right to use the virtual identifier.

15. (Currently amended) A system for concealing the true identity of a user in a communications system, wherein the system comprises:

      a first user equipment configured to request a virtual identifier;

      a second user equipment; and

      a service network configured to receive the request and to establish a virtual identifier for the first user equipment, link the virtual identifier of the first user equipment to a characteristic identifier of the first user equipment, predetermine one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier, and use the virtual identifier of the first user equipment for communication between the first and a second user equipment ~~taking~~on the basis of the predetermined one or more limitations ~~into account~~.

16. (Previously presented) The system of claim 15, wherein the first user equipment is configured to request the virtual identifier from the service network of the communications system.

17. (Canceled)

18. (Previously presented) The system of claim 15, wherein the service network is configured to establish multiple virtual identifiers.

19. (Previously presented) The system of claim 15, wherein the service network of the communications system comprises a set of virtual identifiers and is configured to link one or more of the virtual identifiers of the set to the first characteristic identifier of the first user equipment.

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20. (Previously presented) The system of claim 15, wherein the second user equipment is configured to transmit to the service network of the communications system a request for establishing a communications connection between the first and the second user equipment, the request comprising the virtual identifier of the first user equipment.

21. (Currently amended) ~~A user equipment, wherein the user equipment is~~An apparatus configured to:

    request a virtual identifier;

    establish a virtual identifier;

    link the virtual identifier of the ~~user equipment~~apparatus to a characteristic identifier of the ~~user equipment~~apparatus;

    predetermine one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier; and

    use the virtual identifier of the ~~user equipment~~apparatus for communication between the ~~user equipment~~apparatus and a second ~~user equipment taking~~apparatus on the basis of the predetermined one or more limitations ~~into account~~.

22. (Currently amended) The ~~user equipment~~apparatus of claim 21, wherein the ~~user equipment~~apparatus is configured to establish multiple virtual identifiers.

23. (Currently amended) The ~~user equipment~~apparatus of claim 21, wherein the ~~user equipment~~apparatus is configured to receive information about the use of the virtual identifier linked to the ~~first~~ characteristic identifier of the ~~user equipment~~apparatus from a service network of the communications system when a connection is established between the ~~user equipment~~apparatus and the second ~~user equipment~~apparatus.

24-29. (Canceled)

30. (Currently amended) A method for concealing the true identity of a user in a communications system, the method comprising:

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establishing a connection between a first user equipment and a second user equipment when a virtual identifier established for the first user equipment in at least one of: the first user equipment and the service network, <u>consisting at least in part of numbers where at least a portion of the numbers identify the virtual identifier as a virtual identifier,</u> linked to a first characteristic identifier of the first user equipment, and having predetermined one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier is used by the second user equipment for establishing a connection to the first user equipment <s>taking</s><u>on the basis of</u> the predetermined one or <u>more</u> limitations <s>into account</s>.

31. (Currently amended) An apparatus, comprising:

a database of available virtual identifiers <u>consisting at least partly of numbers where at least a portion of the numbers of each virtual identifier is the same;</u> and

a processor configured to establish a virtual identifier for a first user equipment, link the virtual identifier of the first user equipment to a characteristic identifier of the first user equipment for enabling the use of the virtual identifier of the first user equipment for communication between the first and a second user equipment, and predetermine one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier.

32. (Canceled)

33. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein the apparatus is further configured to send the virtual identifier to the first user equipment via a short message service.

34. (Currently amended) An apparatus, <s>wherein the apparatus is</s> configured to:

link a virtual identifier established for a first user equipment in at least one of the following: the first user equipment and a service network to a characteristic identifier of the first user equipment for enabling the use of the virtual identifier of the first user equipment for communication between the first and a second user equipment <u>wherein the virtual</u>

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identifier consists at least partly of numbers where at least a portion of the numbers identify the virtual identifier as a virtual identifier, and

predetermine one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier wherein communication between the first and second user equipments ~~takes into account~~is on the basis of the one or more predetermined limitations.

35. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 34, wherein the apparatus is further configured to compare a virtual identifier received from the first user equipment or the second user equipment with characteristic identifiers linked to virtual identifiers in a database of the apparatus for enabling establishing a connection between the first user equipment and the second user equipment.

36. (Currently amended) An apparatus, comprising:

memory for storing a list of virtual identifiers consisting at least partly of numbers where at least a portion of the numbers of each virtual identifier is the same wherein one or more virtual identifiers are established for a user equipment in at least one of: the user equipment and a service network, are linked to respective characteristic identifiers of the user equipment, and have predetermined one or more limitations for the use of the one or more virtual identifiers, and

a processor for receiving the one or more virtual identifiers from the user equipment or a second user equipment and comparing the one or more virtual identifiers with the characteristic identifiers linked to the virtual identifiers for enabling the use of the virtual identifiers for communication between the first and the second user equipment ~~taking~~on the basis of the predetermined one or more limitations ~~into account~~.[[\]]

37. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein predetermining one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier includes predetermining a given validity period during which the virtual identifier is valid.

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38. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein predetermining one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier includes predetermining one or more user equipments permitted to use the virtual identifier.

39. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein predetermining one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier includes predetermining certain time periods in which the virtual identifier may be used.

40. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein predetermining one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier includes predetermining that a virtual identifier may only be used in national communication.

41. (Currently amended) The ~~user equipment~~apparatus of claim 21, wherein the ~~user equipment~~apparatus configured to predetermine one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier includes being configured to predetermine a given validity period during which the virtual identifier is valid.

42. (Currently amended) The ~~user equipment~~apparatus of claim 21, wherein the ~~user equipment~~apparatus configured to predetermine one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier includes being configured to predetermine one or more ~~user equipments~~apparatuses permitted to use the virtual identifier.

43. (Currently amended) The ~~user equipment~~apparatus of claim 21, wherein the ~~user equipment~~apparatus configured to predetermine one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier includes being configured to predetermine certain time periods in which the virtual identifier may be used.

44. (Currently amended) The ~~user equipment~~apparatus of claim 21, wherein the ~~user equipment~~apparatus configured to predetermine one or more limitations for the use of the

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virtual identifier includes being configured to predetermine that a virtual identifier may only be used in national communication.

45. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30, wherein having predetermined one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier includes having predetermined a given validity period during which the virtual identifier is valid.

46. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30, wherein having predetermined one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier includes having predetermined one or more user equipments permitted to use the virtual identifier.

47. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30, wherein having predetermined one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier includes having predetermined certain time periods in which the virtual identifier may be used.

48. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30, wherein having predetermined one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier includes having predetermined that a virtual identifier may only be used in national communication.

49. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein the processor configured to predetermine one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier includes being configured to predetermine a given validity period during which the virtual identifier is valid.

50. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein the processor configured to predetermine one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier includes being configured to predetermine one or more user equipments permitted to use the virtual identifier.

51. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein the processor configured to predetermine one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier includes being configured to predetermine certain time periods in which the virtual identifier may be used.

52. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein the processor configured to predetermine one or more limitations for the use of the virtual identifier includes being configured to predetermine that a virtual identifier may only be used in national communication.